

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Supplemental to the amendments to the specification made previously, please further amend the Summary of Invention section on page 2, line 2, to page 3, line 13, as follows:

-- The present invention has been made in consideration of the above situation, and has as its object to strengthen the security when a host computer connected to a network remotely controls information in an image processing apparatus.

To achieve the above object, according to an aspect of the present invention, there is provided an authentication method of an image processing system in which a host computer, an authentication apparatus and an image processing apparatus are connected to a network, the method comprising: a transmission step of, at the image processing apparatus, transmitting data for specifying the authentication apparatus to the host computer in a case where the host computer remotely operates the image processing apparatus; an authentication step of, at the host computer, causing the authentication apparatus specified by the data to perform an authentication process with respect to an operation level of the remote operation from the host computer to the image processing apparatus; and remote operation step of, at the host computer, remotely operating the image processing apparatus in accordance with the operation level authenticated by the authentication apparatus in the authentication step. In a first request step, at the host computer, the image processing apparatus is requested to effect authentication when the host computer remotely operates the image processing apparatus. A transmission step is performed, in which, at the image processing apparatus, data specifying the authentication apparatus to perform an authentication process on an operation level of the remote operation is transmitted to

the host computer in a case where the host computer is authenticated in response to the request in the first request step. In a second request step, at the host computer, a request for the authentication process is issued to the authentication apparatus based on the data transmitted in the transmission step, and in an authentication step, at the authentication apparatus, the authentication process is performed in response to the request in the second request step. A remote operation step is performed at the host computer, in which the image processing apparatus is remotely operated in accordance with the operation level authenticated in the authentication step.

Also, according to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided an image processing system in which a host computer, an authentication apparatus and an image processing apparatus are connected to a network, comprising: ~~a transmission unit configured to, at the image processing apparatus, transmit data for specifying the authentication apparatus to the host computer in a case where the host computer remotely operates the image processing apparatus; an authentication unit configured to, at the host computer, cause the authentication apparatus specified by the data to perform an authentication process with respect to an operation level of the remote operation from the host computer to the image processing apparatus; and a remote operation unit configured to, at the host computer, remotely operate the image process apparatus in accordance with the operation level authenticated by the authentication process a first request unit which, at the host computer, issues a request to the image processing apparatus to effect authentication when the host computer remotely operates the image processing apparatus. A transmission unit, at the image processing apparatus, transmits data specifying the authentication apparatus to perform an authentication process on an operation level of the remote~~

operation to the host computer in a case where the host computer is authenticated in response to the request from the first request unit. A second request unit, at the host computer, issues a request for the authentication process to the authentication apparatus based on the transmitted data, and an authentication unit, at the authentication apparatus, effects execution of the authentication process in response to the request from the second request unit. A remote operation unit, at the host computer, operates the image processing apparatus remotely in accordance with the operation level authenticated in the authentication unit.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the figures.--